135085 - The way to al-Firdaws al-A‘la

the question

Is the way to al-Firdaws al-A‘la (the highest part of Paradise) difficult, and will those who reach it be few? Our noble Messenger said: “If you ask Allah for Paradise, then ask Him for al-Firdaws al-A‘la…” If I repeat a great deal the du‘aa’ “Allaahumma inni as’aluka al-Firdaws al-A‘la min al-Jannah (O Allah, I ask You for al-Firdaws al-A‘la, the highest part of Jannah)”, will I be able to reach it by the grace of Allah, may He be exalted, even if my deeds are not enough to make me reach that status? What are the best deeds that will help us to reach it by Allah’s leave? Also, there is a hadith of our Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “If a person asks Allah for Paradise three times, Paradise says: ‘O Allah, admit him to Paradise…’” So is it permissible for me to say “O Allah I ask You for al-Firdaws al-A‘la, the highest part of Paradise” instead of “O Allah, I ask You for Paradise”?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

At-Tirmidhi narrated (2450) – and classed it as saheeh – that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever is concerned should set out when it is still night and whoever sets out when it is still night will reach the destination. Verily the merchandise of Allah is expensive, verily the merchandise of Allah is Paradise.”

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi and elsewhere.

Paradise is expensive merchandise, and al-Firdaws al-A‘la is the highest and best part of Paradise. No one reaches it except those whom Allah has singled out for more of His grace.

At-Tirmidhi narrated (3174) – and classed it as saheeh – from Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “al-Firdaws is the highest part of Paradise, and the centre and the best of it.”

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Paradise is surrounded with difficulties and Hell is surrounded with desires.” Agreed upon.

If Paradise is surrounded with difficulties and different kinds of hardships, then how about the highest of its degrees and the most sublime of its statuses?

This indicates that the matter is not something easy.

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

The purest of all created things, and the most sublime, luminous, noblest and highest in both literal and metaphorical terms is the Throne of the Most Gracious, may He be glorified and exalted. Hence it was fit for Him to rise above it. Therefore the closer anything is to the Throne, the more luminous, pure and noble it is than that which is further away from it. Hence Jannat al-Firdaws is the highest, noblest, most luminous and best part of Paradise, because it is close to the Throne, for the Throne is its roof, and the further away anything is from it, the darker and more constricted it is. Hence the lowest of the low is the worst of places and the most constricted and furthest from all that is good. End quote.

Al-Fawaa’id (p. 27).

The people of al-Firdaws al-A‘la are the ones who hasten to do good as they are commanded. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And those foremost ((in Islamic Faith of Monotheism and in performing righteous deeds) in the life of this world on the very first call for to embrace Islam,) will be foremost (in Paradise).

These will be those nearest to Allah.

In the Gardens of delight (Paradise)”

[al-Waaqi‘ah 56:10-12].

As-Sa‘di said:

Those who are nearest to Allah are the elite of mankind.

End quote. Tafseer as-Sa‘di (p. 833)

Ibn Katheer said:

Whoever competes in doing righteous deeds in this world and wins the contest, in the hereafter he will be among the first to attain reward and honour, for the recompense matches the nature of the deed and as you do, so you will be requited. End quote.

Tafseer Ibn Katheer (7/517)

Secondly:

It should be noted that one of the best means of attaining what you want and being saved from what you fear is supplication (du‘aa’), for supplication is worship, as it was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in a saheeh hadith. As it is an act of worship that is beloved to Allah, it is a means of attaining one’s goal. When Allah wills good for a person, He causes him to take the measures that lead to it and He makes it easy to do the deeds that will qualify him to attain that. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“As for him who gives (in charity) and keeps his duty to Allah and fears Him,

And believes in Al-Husna,

We will make smooth for him the path of ease (goodness).

But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient,

And gives the lie to Al-Husna,

We will make smooth for him the path for evil”

[al-Layl 92:5-10].

Al-Bukhaari (2790) narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “In Paradise there are one hundred levels that Allah has prepared for those who strive in jihad for the sake of Allah. The distance between each two levels is like the distance between heaven and earth. So if you ask of Allah, then ask Him for al-Firdaws, for it is the middle of Paradise and the highest part of Paradise. I think above it is the Throne of the Most Gracious, and from it spring the rivers of Paradise.”

Al-Haafiz said:

This indicates that al-Firdaws is above all of Paradise. Hence the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, teaching the ummah and motivating them: “If you ask of Allah, then ask Him for al-Firdaws.” End quote.

Thirdly:

It should be noted that attaining high status in this world and the hereafter cannot be done by means of wishful thinking and dreaming; rather it can only be by taking the measures that lead to that. Otherwise there would be no difference between one who is honest and one who is a liar. This is by the wisdom of Allah, may He be exalted, that He has made His slaves accountable and enjoined certain things upon them.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“It will not be in accordance with your desires (Muslims), nor those of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), whosoever works evil, will have the recompense thereof, and he will not find any protector or helper besides Allah.

And whoever does righteous good deeds, male or female, and is a true believer in the Oneness of Allah (Muslim), such will enter Paradise and not the least injustice, even to the size of a Naqeera (speck on the back of a datestone), will be done to them”

[an-Nisa’ 4:123-124].

Shaykh Ibn Sa‘di said:

“It” that is, the matter of your salvation and purification “will not be in accordance with your wishes nor those of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)”. “Wishes” refers to self-talk that is not based in actions, and which is accompanied by mere claims; if one wished the opposite, it would be all the same. This is general in meaning and applies to all matters, so how about if it applies to the issues of faith and eternal happiness?... His deeds either confirm that claim or demonstrate that it is false.

End quote from Tafseer as-Sa‘di (205)

Fourthly:

Among the most important deeds that will help the Muslim attain high status, and may help him to attain al-Firdaws al-A‘la, by Allah’s mercy, are the following:

·Jihad for the sake of Allah

We have quoted above the hadith of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) which speaks of that.

Muslim narrated in his Saheeh (1884) from Abu Sa‘eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “O Abu Sa‘eed, whoever is content with Allah as his Lord, Islam as his religion and Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) as his Prophet, Paradise is guaranteed for him.” Abu Sa‘eed wondered at that and said: Say it to me again, O Messenger of Allah. He did that, then he said: “And there is something else by means of which a person will be raised one hundred levels in Paradise, and the

distance between each two levels is like the distance between heaven and earth.” He said: What is it, O Messenger of Allah? He said: “Jihad for the sake of Allah, jihad for the sake of Allah.”

·Sincerity towards Allah

Muslim (1909) narrated from Sahl ibn Hunayf (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever sincerely asks Allah for martyrdom, Allah will cause him to attain the status of the martyrs, even if he dies in his bed.”

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This indicates that it is mustahabb to ask Allah for martyrdom and it is mustahabb to have good intentions. End quote.

·Belief in Allah and in His Messengers

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily! Those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous deeds, shall have the Gardens of Al-Firdaws (the Paradise) for their entertainment”

[al-Kahf 18:107].

As-Sa‘di said:

It may be that what is meant by the Gardens of al-Firdaws is the highest part of Paradise, the middle and the best thereof, and that this reward is for the one who perfected his faith and righteous deeds, and for the Prophets and those who are nearest to Allah.

Or it may be that what is meant is all the levels of Paradise, so this reward includes all levels of people of faith, including those who are nearest to Allah, the righteous, and ordinary believers, each according to his condition. This is more likely to be the meaning, because of its general nature.

End quote from Tafseer as-Sa‘di (488).

It was narrated from Abu Sa‘eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The people of Paradise will see the people of the chambers above them as they see a brilliant star far away on the horizon in the east or in the west, because of the difference in status between them.” They said: O Messenger of Allah, will those be the chambers of the Prophets that will be attained by no one else? He said: “No, by the One in Whose hand is my soul; they will be men who believed in Allah and believed in the Messengers.”

Agreed upon.

Al-Haafiz said:

The words “and believed in the Messengers” mean in the true sense of the word, otherwise everyone who believed in Allah and believed in His Messengers would reach that level, and that is not the case.

·Doing wudoo’ when it is difficult, taking many steps to the mosque, and waiting for prayer after prayer

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Shall I not tell you something by means of which Allah erases sins and raises people in status?” They said: Yes, O Messenger of Allah. He said: “Doing wudoo’ properly at times when it is difficult to do so, taking many steps to the mosque, and waiting for prayer after prayer. That is constant readiness.”

Narrated by Muslim (251)

·The acts of obedience that are mentioned in saheeh reports as means of being with the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in Paradise

Muslim (489) narrated that Rabee‘ah ibn Ka‘b al-Aslami (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I

used to stay overnight with the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and bring him water for wudoo' and whatever he needed. He said to me: "Ask." I said: I ask to be with you in Paradise. He said: "Is there anything else?" I said: That is all, He said: "Help me to do that for you by prostrating a great deal."

Muslim also narrated (2983) that Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "The one who sponsors an orphan, whether it is a relative of his or not, he and I will be like these two in Paradise," and Maalik pointed with his forefinger and middle finger.

And he narrated (2631) that Anas ibn Maalik said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: : "Whoever takes care of two girls until they reach puberty, he and I will come like this on the Day of Resurrection" – and he held his two fingers together.

Imam Ahmad narrated (12089) that Anas or someone else said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever takes care of two or three daughters, or two or three sisters, until they die before him or he dies before them, he and I will be like these two," and he gestured with his forefinger and middle finger.

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in as-Saheehah (296)

To sum up: striving hard in doing righteous deeds, hastening to do good deeds, persisting in righteous deeds and acts of kindness, and competing in doing good and righteous deeds form the basis for reaching what one most hopes for in this world and the hereafter, even if that ultimate goal is al-Firdaws al-A'la.

See also the answer to question no. 27075

And Allah knows best.